



Old Testament Theology I: *Pentateuch and Former Prophets*

Syllabus

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I N S T I T U T E O F
T H E O L O G I C A L
S T U D I E S



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Course Rationale

In order to understand and apply any passage of Scripture faithfully, one must begin with the foundational concepts and theology that precede and inform it. Perhaps the most foundational section of the canon is Genesis-Kings (the Pentateuch and Former Prophets). The history and theology of this section of the Bible is essential for fully grasping the meaning and message of Jesus' teaching and our mission in the world today. As one gains the conceptual skills and perspective developed in the Old Testament texts and carried over into the New Testament, one discovers a fuller view of God, realizes a greater appreciation for the superintended flow of human history, and develops a deeper sense of mission for our contemporary lives.

Course Overview

In this course, Dr. Richard E. Averbeck introduces the content and theology of Genesis-Kings, identifying the foundational themes that emerge and tracing them through the rest of the Bible. More than a survey of the Old Testament, the goal of the course is to work through the books section-by-section focusing on major passages and their theological connections through all of Scripture (Old *and* New Testament). Special attention is given throughout the course to the significance of these passages for the Church and the Christian life in order to keep the student keenly aware of the need to go beyond a simplistic and mechanistic reading of the text into a deeply implicational reading that expects to be both informed and impacted by its message. *(This course is the first of a two-part series by Dr. Averbeck and is followed up by Old Testament Theology II: Latter Prophets and Writings.)*

Course Objectives

Given active participation, upon completion of this course you will be able to:

1. Identify various genres of literature in Genesis through Kings and learn to interpret them well.
2. Articulate the significance of Genesis 1-11 as the primeval historical and theological foundation for understanding our human experience in the world.
3. Understand how the Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy) lays the historical and especially the theological foundation for the Former Prophets (Joshua-Kings) and for the rest of the Bible.
4. Understand how the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets fit together within the canon, and how they contribute to our understanding of faith experience in ancient Israel.
5. Value the ways Ancient Near Eastern literature can inform our reading of Scripture.
6. Become familiar with the history recorded in Genesis through Kings and how it relates to the history of the surrounding Ancient Near Eastern world.
7. Trace the overall historical progression of God's covenantal redemptive program from Genesis through Revelation.
8. Value all of the above as crucial to an ongoing study of the whole canon of Scripture as well as foundational to the way we live our Christian lives and pursue our ministries.

Course Lecturer

Richard E. Averbeck is professor of Old Testament and Semitic languages at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois (1994-present).



He has published numerous journal articles as well as contributed to several books and dictionaries, including the *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Baker 1995), *Faith, Tradition, and History* (Eisenbrauns 1994), *Cracking Old Testament Codes: Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Literary Forms* (Broadman & Holman 1995) and the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Zondervan, 1997).

As the Director of the Spiritual Formation Forum, he is also a leader in evangelical spiritual formation. He and his wife, Melinda, have two sons. His education credentials are:

Calvary Bible College, B.A.

Grace Theological Seminary, M.A., M.Div.

Annenberg Research Institute (formerly Dropsie College), Ph.D.

Course Texts

Required Texts:

Dyrness, William. *Themes in Old Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979.

Sandy, D. Brent & Ronald L. Giese, Jr., eds., *Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide to Interpreting the Literary Genres of the Old Testament*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995.

Walton, John H. *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*. Revised and Expanded. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994.

Recommended Texts:

Alexander, T. Desmond and David W. Baker, editors, *Dictionary of the Old Testament, Vol. 1: Pentateuch*, Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

Hamilton, Victor P. *Handbook on the Pentateuch*. Second edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005.

Howard, David M., Jr. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books*. Chicago: Moody, 1993.

Walton, John H. *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Whether you sit in a traditional classroom or study from a distance, you will benefit from interaction, collaboration, and spiritual formation (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 10.3.3.3; 10.3.4.3). In order to meet this need in distance theological education, ITS is developing structures and resources to encourage spiritual formation and community interaction in our courses. In this course, we have included three collaborative learning features:

1. ITS Online Interactivity Forum (see course learning activities) – fosters peer-to-peer interaction in a global, threaded discussion (required for all students)
2. Spiritual Formation Project (see course learning activities) – fosters mentor-to-learner interaction in a mentor-guided reflection, discussion and application (required for all students)
3. Learning Community Assignments (see end of syllabus) – fosters peer-to-peer collaboration in a group approach to assignments (optional but recommended where possible)

Go to www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/ for the most up-to-date ITS resources.

Course Learning Activities

Learning Activity #1: Lectures and Reflection Questions

Listen carefully to all 24 lectures by Dr. Averbeck and work through the accompanying reflection questions. Through this process you will be introduced to Dr. Averbeck's approach to biblical theology and to the content of the theology itself. It is recommended that you listen actively with Bible in hand to look up references when necessary. Your goal here is to acquire a working knowledge of the contents of Genesis-Kings and to listen for what God wants to say to you personally and to the Church corporately. The theology contained in this part of the OT is foundational to all of Scripture and therefore to the Christian faith.

NOTE: Although the lectures are not factored into your course grade, they are foundational to the course, so the Research Paper, Thought Paper and Spiritual Formation Project (see below) all assume you have completed them. In addition, the reflection questions are optional but will help you *process the lecture material in preparation for the Thought Paper and Spiritual Formation Project.*

Purpose: *to accumulate course content through active and careful listening and to cognitively interact with the material and apply it to the Christian life.*

Using the ITS Learning Guide: The ITS Learning Guide includes twenty-four lessons with lesson overviews, outcomes, outlines, and reflection questions. This is intended to walk you through the course in a systematic and user-friendly way. Note the following:

- ✓ **Lecture Outlines:** The lecture outlines contain a detailed teaching manuscript with extensive notes and Scripture references. They serve as both a guide to listening/note-taking and also a valuable study and reference tool. ***It is recommended that you read each lecture outline in full prior to listening to the lecture. This will help you follow along more carefully.***
- ✓ **Reflection Questions:** The reflection questions are not factored into your course grade. However, these questions were written carefully in order to help you process the material and begin to apply it (at least in a preliminary way) to your life of faith. Although you are not required to write answers to every question, *it is recommended that you give them considerable thought and reflection. In addition to your notes, they will become a journal of your thoughts and growth in the course.*
- ✓ **Appendices:** There are two appendices at the end of the learning guide which present additional *and important* material not included in the lectures. They discuss in detail the historical, literary background of Deuteronomy (including Dr. Averbeck's outline of the book) and key issues relating to the Law and the Christian life (i.e. Sabbath observance).

- ✓ Scripture Quotations: Several Scripture passages that are central to the discussion at hand are provided in the right margin¹ with Dr. Averbeck's emphases and amplification. This will help you follow along.

Learning Activity #2: Required Reading

Complete the following and submit a **reading log** listing all completed readings:

1. Read **Genesis-Kings** and several additional texts *as assigned in each lesson*. You should use a modern translation (not a paraphrase), e.g., RSV, NASB, NKJV, NIV, NRSV, etc.
2. Read William Dyrness' *Themes in Old Testament Theology* in its entirety. Although this is an older text (written in 1979), it provides a well-respected summary of important OT themes. Dyrness' work supplements and compliments Dr. Averbeck's work in the lectures.
3. Read Sandy and Giese's text, *Cracking Old Testament Codes*, in its entirety. This text is a compilation by several scholars (including Dr. Averbeck) and provides background and perspective on the various genres of the Old Testament, which are crucial for proper interpretation.
4. Read **500 additional pages** from the recommended texts, the readings referenced in the lecture outlines or the course bibliography. This is your opportunity to pursue topics of interest. Readings completed for your research paper (see below) may count toward this reading requirement. List all completed readings in your reading log.

NOTE: Walton's text, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*, is a valuable reference tool, and the lectures refer to it frequently. However, it may not be used toward the required reading.

Purpose: *to supplement the lecture material through active reading of additional works and to pursue student-identified topics of interest.*

Learning Activity #3: Research Paper

Write an original research paper (**18-20 pages**, double-spaced, excluding footnotes and bibliography) on a theological theme developed from one or more passages in Genesis-Kings (should be approved by your grader/proctor). The paper should be based on and especially focus on the foundational passage(s) in these books but also follow the development of the theme through the remainder of the OT into the NT. If you know either of the biblical languages, conduct your exegetical work from these texts. This paper should reflect your ability to do *serious independent research/writing* in the field of OT biblical theology and to *apply that research to ministry and the Christian life.*

In addition to your own exegetical work in the biblical text itself, you should do a bibliographical search to identify and consult at least ten other secondary sources. These could and should include a combination of general reference tools (e.g., Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, word books, etc.), other books that are useful for the topic (e.g., commentaries, historical or theological survey books, specialized books on the topic, etc.), scholarly journal articles, and perhaps even credible internet

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sites. Substantial footnotes (or endnotes) and bibliography are expected. Format the paper according to your school or institutional guidelines.

Purpose: to develop exegetical, biblical and theological research and writing skills, to gain an in-depth understanding of one specific theme in OT biblical theology, and to apply that understanding to ministry and the Christian life.

Learning Activity #4: Thought Paper

Write a **10 page**, double-spaced “thought paper” reflecting on the content of the course. The paper should be broken down into two main sections: The first section should reflect serious thought about the relevance of Genesis-Kings for the church and the Christian life. The second section should develop the significance of Genesis-Kings for the ministry(ies) in which you are (or will be) engaged with your family, local church, or community. Seek concrete application of the material to the Christian life, the church or ministry wherever possible.

This paper is to reflect your own *independent thinking and synthesis* of the course reading and lectures. It is a “thought paper”, **not a research paper**, so footnotes and bibliography are not necessary unless you wish to include them for your own purposes. Always tie your thoughts to specific Scripture passages from which you make your point of application to theology, life, and ministry (especially something in Genesis-Kings, but also extending through the rest of the OT and into the NT).

Purpose: to synthesize the course content and apply it to ministry and the Christian life.

Learning Activity #5: ITS Online Interactivity Forum

Participate with other students worldwide in an ongoing asynchronous threaded discussion of two major course topics. Go to <http://forums.itscourses.org/> to enter the ITS Online Interactivity Forum. In order to get the fullest benefit from the Forum, complete the assignment *after* you have listened to *all* the lectures. Be sure to return to the forum after finishing the course to see how others respond. Follow these steps to complete the assignment:

- ◆ Post an original answer to each question for your course (75 word min.).
- ◆ Post your response to any previous answer given to each question (75 word min.).
- ◆ Submit a document to your proctor that contains the original questions, your postings, and the postings to which you responded.

NOTE: Please read the “Forum Instructions” for details on registering and posting.

Purpose: *to develop critical thinking skills through personal interaction with the content of the course and the responses of others within a diverse community of learners.*

Learning Activity #6: Spiritual Formation Project

RATIONALE: Ministry preparation and the Christian life require more than academic exercises. Learners also need personal, spiritual formation, which involves theological reflection and critical thinking on their current practices and assumptions. This process occurs as learners engage in self-reflection and interaction in a community of learning. **With this in mind**, ITS includes in all courses a capstone project addressing these issues and facilitating interaction beyond the formal learning environment (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 4.1.1; 10.3.3.3).

Write a **5-6 page reflective essay** and **interview a mentor**, discussing the spiritual impact of this course on your life. *Identify your mentor early in the course*, and submit the essay to your grader at the end of the course. This last project should not be a summary of course content, but an application of course principles. Complete the following:

1. **Personal Reflection and Evaluation: *Reflect on the course*** – To integrate your academic studies with your walk of faith, reflect on the content of the course and evaluate your life in light of what you learned.
 - a. Follow these steps in your reflection:
 - Step 1: What **one** theme, principle, or concept in the course is the most significant to you personally? Why is it significant?
 - Step 2: What portion(s) of the course brought this theme/principle/concept to light?
 - Step 3: Think about your past. Why is it vital now for you to deal with and apply this theme/principle/concept?
 - Step 4: How should this affect your thoughts and actions, and what *specific steps* should you take to *concretely* apply what you have learned?
 - b. Write your answers to the above questions in full paragraph form. Suggested length for this reflection: 3 pages.

c. Give a copy of this reflection to your mentor (see #2).

2. **Community Reflection and Interaction: *Interview a mentor*** – Since the Holy Spirit uses the input of others to guide and form His people, interview a mentor according to the following guidelines:

a. Who should you interview? (1-3 are required; 4-6 are recommended)

1. Someone with whom you have a reasonably close relationship.
2. Someone who is a mature Christian ministry leader (i.e. a pastor).
3. Someone who is not your grader or a family member.
4. Someone who values the spiritual formation process.
5. Someone who is familiar with and values the subject of the course.
6. Someone who has experience using the content of the course in ministry.

NOTE: ***Identify your mentor early in the course***, and give him/her the page entitled “Guidelines for Mentors.”

b. Focus of the interview – Your interview should focus on the issues and questions you raise in your essay. For example:

- ♦ What feedback can your mentor give in response to your essay?
- ♦ In light of the course content, are the conclusions you made appropriate? Why or why not?
- ♦ What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications might he/she suggest from his/her own life and ministry?

NOTE: Conduct this interview either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do **not** use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc). Suggested length: 45 minutes.

3. **Synthesis and Application: *Draw your final conclusions*** – Having reflected on the course and the discussion with your mentor, synthesize what you have learned in these three sections:

a. Section 1: Begin your essay with the personal reflection from #1 above. This should be exactly what you gave your mentor for the interview.

- b. Section 2: Comment on your interview, explaining what you discussed and the insights you gained from your mentor. Include the following:
- ◆ What were the mentor’s comments regarding your essay?
 - ◆ What advice did he/she give?
 - ◆ How did his/her comments expand or correct your application of the course?
 - ◆ Include the person’s name, occupation, and the length of the interview.
- c. Section 3: Conclude with a synthesis of what you have learned. Answer the following:
- ◆ If your mentor corrected any thoughts in your “Personal Reflection and Evaluation,” how do you feel about these corrections? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
 - ◆ Synthesizing your thoughts from section one and your mentor’s insight in section two, what final conclusions have you reached? How is this different from section one?
 - ◆ In light of the interview and further reflection, what additional, *specific* changes need to occur in your life and what *concrete* steps will you take to implement them?

NOTE TO STUDENTS: Your effort in this assignment will determine its benefit. If by the end of this course you have not yet reflected critically on your life in light of what you have studied, allow this assignment to guide you in that process. The instructor for this course will not score your essay based on the amount of spiritual fruit you describe; so do not exaggerate (or trivialize) what you have learned. **The primary grading criteria is that you have thoughtfully considered the principles of the course and realistically sought to apply them to your life.** If you have done this and met the minimal requirements (as noted above), you will earn the full points for this assignment.

Note on confidentiality: Perhaps the Holy Spirit is dealing with you in some very personal areas of your life. Because of this, your grader will keep your essay entirely confidential and either return or discard it.

Purpose: *to stimulate reflection and interaction on course principles in order to enhance personal spiritual formation.*

Course Grading

The grade for the course shall be determined by the following:

Lectures and Reflection Questions	
Required Reading	10%
Thought Paper	30%
Research Paper	35%
ITS Online Interactivity Forum	5%
Spiritual Formation Project	<u>20%</u>
	100%

NOTE: Given the amount of thought and work required in the above assignments, **there is no exam for this course.** Your focus should be on quality research, writing, reflection, synthesis and application.

Syllabus

Notes Regarding This Downloaded Syllabus

This downloadable syllabus is not exhaustive. It is designed to provide learners with a picture of the course, not a full outline of the course. Grader Guidelines, Appendixes, Bibliographies, Lecture Outlines, and Review Questions have been removed. The complete course syllabus is included with purchase of the course in either a digital or hard-copy format.

Likewise, individuals taking the class for credit are responsible for the syllabus requirements of the specific institution through which the course is offered. Each individual institution has reserved the right to alter or change the syllabus as deemed necessary.